

Please not read this letter to strangers. I have written with too much abandon for the public eye.

48
New York Oct. 23^d 1844

Dear Friend,

How soon you went silent again, after writing me that beautiful letter about 'Vieux Temps.' And I wanted so to have you write me what you thought of 'Old Bul.' I will not be like the man who urged Stuart, the artist, to come and give his opinion of some old picture he was exhibiting. "Some people say they are copies," said he; "but I swear I'll knock down the first person that intimates they are not by the old masters." I will not thus ask your opinion of 'Old Bul.'; but I shall be grieved if you do not deeply feel the beauty and the power of his music. It has awakened in me a new sense — it has so stirred the depths of my soul, and kindled my whole being, that my heart bounds forth to meet one that sympathizes with me. Old as I am, it is the strongest enthusiasm of my life. I could have thrown my arms round Susan Lyman's neck, when she told me that her experience had been like mine; that from him she dated the birth of a new sense. It may seem presumptuous in poor ignorant me, to say it; but against a million learned critics, I do

Now please do write before a great while. If I do not sign any name, you will know that this bubbling effusion comes from your affectionate friend, L. Maria Child.

say I would venture to assert that nothing but genius, and transcendent genius, too, could take such possession of my soul.

There has been a French clique here, that have tried from the beginning to underrate him. Partly on account of *Vieux Temps*, and partly because he and his music are both too spontaneous and inartificial to please the French. They have done a great many mean things, and tried hard to set a fashion of criticising and depreciating him, as they did Shakespeare before him. What's the use of comparing him and *Vieux Temps*, or Shakespeare and Racine? The things are too different in character to be compared.

Concerning the alleged "false notes" of Gluck, I, of course, do not presume to judge. But I don't believe the assertion. Simply because I do not believe that an organization so exquisitely attuned to music as his, could itself endure false notes. Certainly he has reasons for departures from established rules; wild and wayward they may be; but it surely is not want of ear, or want of knowledge. You know the critics complained much of Beethoven's aberrations. They alleged that he did certain things which distinguished masters of the science had forbidden. "Do they forbid it?" said Beethoven. "Well, then, I permit it."

Will you answer me? Will you? One of the oldest musicians here, says: "I am a cool and candid observer. I have heard *Vieux Temps*, and admired his perfect skill and finish. I have heard all that the French and Italian critics here have to urge; I have heard Paganini again and again. But there is no mistake about it; no man has done such wonders on the violin as Ole Bul. No man living or that has lived, equalled him in tone and power. Paganini himself fell short of him in these attributes."

You would be charmed with the personal character of Ole Bul. He is just like a child. Diffident of himself, and sensitive, oh so sensitive, that a rude breath hurts him. The extreme and beautiful simplicity of his character is not appreciated by the worldlings. To them it seems like weakness.

Then all nature breathes
through his soul with
such free joy! The other

day he was playing on the violin, and a bird in the room mocked him exactly. He cried, he laughed, he jumped. He was like a child to whom an absent mother had returned and spoken suddenly. He make false notes! If he does, so does nature herself.

Now my object in writing this is to ask you, if you admire his genius, as I hope you do, to write one of those eloquent articles of yours for the *Democratic*. Don't let any one know that I asked you, though; for should he hear of it, I think it would both give him pain, and offend him. He pursues a very dignified and manly course about such things. He leaves his reputation to take care of itself, without any such efforts on the part of himself or his friends.

John Gopper, my good adopted son, desires
the most cordial remembrance to you.

Does he impress you enough to make you wish to write about him? If not, I need not charge you not to undertake it. If you wish to hear him frequently, with a view to understand and describe his characteristics, I can easily have matters arranged, so that it will be pecuniarily easy for you to do so. Tell me frankly, whether you would like to do it. And I pray you, answer this letter before the end of the world.

Q

Box 1000

E.S.S.

John S. Dwight.

West Roxbury.

Mass to

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(3.)

J. Maria Child. Oct. 23. 1844.

MS. E. 4. 1. 10. 48

Susan Lyman spent a week in N. York a short time ago, and I got more acquainted with her than I ever was before. She is a lovely and a gentle creature. We talked much of you. I have been studying a great deal about music for the last few months; and I have so wanted you near to answer questions. There are so many things that books cannot tell me. By the way, Ole Bul says that what I write and talk is to him like the study of counter-point. What does that mean? It must be florid counter-point, I think.

Now please do write before a great while. If I do not sign my name, you will know